

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCA-01 VO-03 PER-01 /016 W

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R 110012Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8836

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 MEXICO 6162

FOR SCA WALENTYNOWICZ AND ARA ROGERS

EO 11652: NA

TAGS: CGEN, MX

SUBJECT: NIV WORKLOAD AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

1. THE PROBLEM OF COPING WITH CRUSH OF NIV APPLICANTS DISCUSSED BY THE AMBASSADOR AND SCA ADMINISTRATOR IN MAY HAS REACHED CRITICAL PROPORTIONS HERE IN LAST TWO WEEKS. LAST WEEK NIV LINE STARTED FORMING AT EMBASSY GATE AROUND 1900 HOURS FOR NEXT DAY ADMISSION. THIS WEEK LINE HAS STARTED FORMING ABOUT 1400 HOURS. BY EARLY MORNING, LINE CIRCLES EMBASSY AND DOUBLES BACK. CONSISTENCY OF RAINY SEASON DOWNPOURS IN LATE AFTERNOON AND EVENING ADDS TO DISCOMFITURE OF ALL-NIGHT VIGIL BY APPLICANTS.

2. THIS WEEK WE HAVE HAD TO SHUT GATE AROUND 0930, ONE HOUR AFTER 0830 OPENING AND MONDAY, FOR EXAMPLE, PROCESSED CLOSE TO 2000 APPLICATIONS. BUT WE HAVE SHUT OUT SEVERAL HUNDRED APPLICANTS, SOME OF WHOM PRESUMABLY STOOD OR SAT IN THE RAIN THROUGH THE NIGHT. WE, OF COURSE, DO NOT KNOW HOW MANY OTHERS ARE DISCOURAGED FROM GETTING IN THE LINE MERELY BECAUSE OF ITS LENGTH.

3. IN ADDITION TO USE OF OFFICERS FROM OTHER SECTIONS OF EMBASSY TO SIGN VISAS, WHICH HAS BEEN GOING ON FOR SEVERAL MONTHS, WE BEGAN UTILIZING OFFICERS FROM OTHER OFFICES OF CONSULAR SECTION TO HANDLE TRAVEL AGENCY (NON-INTERVIEW) CASES. HOWEVER, OTHER OFFICES OF CONSULAR SECTION SORELY
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PRESSED IN VIEW PRISONER PROBLEM, ABSENCE OF ONE VICE CONSUL

ON LONG PLANNED LEAVE AND INDEFINITE INCAPACITATION OF HEAD OF CITIZENS SERVICES SECTION (DANIELS) WHO UNDERWENT SURGERY AT ABC HOSPITAL MONDAY FOR SEVERELY BROKEN SHOULDER INCURRED IN TRYING TO APPREHEND A PURSESNAATCHER. OF COURSE, FACT THAT POSITION OF NIV SECTION CHIEF IS VACANT AND WILL REMAIN SO UNTIL SEPTEMBER OBVIOUSLY MAKES OUR SITUATION MORE DIFFICULT.

4. WE ARE NOW USING FROM SIX TO TEN OFFICERS WITH SOME VISA EXPERIENCE FROM OTHER SECTIONS OF EMBASSY TO WORK ON TRAVEL AGENCY (NON-INTERVIEW) CASES TO FREE NIV OFFICERS TO WORK ON THE LINE. (WE ARE ALSO UTILIZING OFFICERS FROM OTHER SECTIONS FOR PRISON VISITS WHEN THEY ARE TRAVELLING ON OFFICIAL BUSINESS TO AREAS WHERE THERE ARE AMERICANS IMPRISONED.) HOWEVER, THIS OF COURSE SERIOUSLY IMPINGES ON THESE OFFICERS' ABILITY TO GET THEIR OWN JOBS DONE. AND THE SITUATION HAS OTHER ADVERSE EFFECTS ON OTHER SECTIONS OF THE EMBASSY IN THAT LOCAL CONTACTS IMPORTANT TO THEM NOW HAVE GREAT DIFFICULTY IN GETTING THEIR VISAS.

5. COMPOUNDING THE PROBLEM IS "DOWN" AND "SLOW" TIME OF THE COMPUTER. TODAY, WHEN ALL SECTIONS OF THE EMBASSY WERE GEARED UP IN A CONCERTED EMBASSY-WIDE EFFORT TO TRY TO SERVICE ALL THE APPLICANTS IN THE LINE WE WERE INFORMED BY WASHINGTON THAT THE COMPUTER WOULD BE ON "SLOW" TIME BECAUSE PAYROLLS WERE BEING PROCESSED. THE LAST TIME THIS HAPPENED WE DID NOT OBTAIN ACCESS UNTIL 1600 HOURS. THIS MEANS LOOKOUT CLEARANCES WILL HAVE TO BE DONE MANUALLY USING THE LOOKOUT BOOK, AND OUR HOPES OF WIPING OUT TODAY'S LINE (COMPOSED, IN PART, OF THOSE OF SEVERAL PREVIOUS DAYS WHO DID NOT GET INTO THE EMBASSY) ARE DASHED.

6. ALTHOUGH IT MAY BE FLATTERING TO HAVE SO MANY PEOPLE WANT TO GO TO OUR COUNTRY (AS SOME LIKE TO SAY, YOU DON'T SEE ANY LINE OF VISA APPLICANTS AT THE SOVIET EMBASSY), THE FACT REMAINS THAT OUR INABILITY TO DO OUR JOB IS HARDLY AN IMAGE WE LIKE TO PROJECT. THE LINE IS UNTIDY, TO SAY THE LEAST, PARTICULARLY WITH THE ATTENDANT LITTER OF NEWSPAPERS, BOTTLES, ETC., RESULTING FROM AN ALL NIGHT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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STAY (SENATORS MANSFIELD AND PERCY (SEE SEPTTEL) EXPRESSED DISMAY OVER THE SITUATION AND OFFERED TO HELP.) THE DEPARTMENT IS FAMILIAR WITH THE VARIOUS BY-PRODUCTS OF SUCH A SITUATION SUCH AS SELLING PLACES IN LINE, TRYING BACK DOOR CHANNELS, THE UNDUE PERSONAL STRAIN PLACED ON VISA PERSONNEL, ETC. AND WE ARE FORTUNATE THAT, AT LEAST SO FAR, THE APPLICANT LINE HAS BEEN RELATIVELY PLACID. IN ANY EVENT, FROM THE BROADER POINT

OF VIEW THE SITUATION GOES DIRECTLY CONTRARY TO THE
DIRECTIVE, ENSHRINED IN THE FAM AND ENUNCIATED BY THE
PRESIDENT ON DOWN, TO ENCOURAGE AND PROMOTE TRAVEL TO
THE US. DESPITE OUR BEST EFFORTS WE ARE, IN EFFECT,
DISCOURAGING IT (OR AT LEAST MAKING IT DAMNED DIFFICULT
AND UNPLEASANT TO GET STARTED).

7 NO DOUBT WE CAN IMPROVE OUR PERFORMANCE AND PERHAPS
CAN DEVISE BETTER PROCEDURES, METHODS AND TECHNIQUES.
WE ARE TRYING TO DO BOTH. PERHAPS WE CAN EVEN FIND
SOME PLACE TO HIDE THE LINE FROM PUBLIC VIEW. BUT WE
CANNOT ENVISAGE ANY DRAMATIC BREAKTHROUGH THAT IS GOING
TO SOLVE THE BASIC PROBLEM THAT WE ARE NOT ABLE TO GIVE
ANYTHING REMOTELY RESEMBLING ADEQUATE SERVICE TO THE
PUBLIC, BOTH AMERICAN AND FOREIGN, THAT IS DICTATED
BY OUR BROADER INTERESTS. NOR DO WE ENVISAGE THE PROBLEM
DIMINISHING. THUS, AS USUAL, THE MATTER BOILS DOWN TO
A QUESTION OF ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES, PARTICULARLY
PERSONNEL.

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ACTION ARA-10

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R 110112Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8837

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FOR SCA WALENTYNOWICZ AND ARA ROGERS

8. IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING OUR PERSPECTIVE IS DIFFERENT
FROM THAT OF WASHINGTON. BUT THE FACT REMAINS THAT THE
CONSULAR ACTIVITY, PARTICULARLY THE VISA FUNCTION, IS
PROBABLY THE MOST VISIBLE OF OUR ACTIVITIES HERE IN
MEXICO. AND IN THIS ACTIVITY WE ARE DEALING DIRECTLY
AND PERSONALLY WITH HOST COUNTRY NATIONALS ON A MATTER
OF DIRECT, PERSONAL AND IMMEDIATE CONCERN TO THEM. BUT
IN THAT VISIBILITY WE DISPLAY A VERY BAD IMAGE. IF EACH

DAY 1500 TO 2000 VISA APPLICANTS AT THE EMBASSY HAVE AN UNPLEASANT EXPERIENCE FOR WHICH THE BLAME THE USG, WE CAN GENERATE A GREAT DEAL OF ILL WILL IN A VERY SHORT TIME. (LOCAL PAPERS ARE RUNNING CRITICAL ARTICLES AND PICTURES OF THE LINE AND COMPLAINTS TO ALL SECTIONS OF THE EMBASSY ARE LEGION.) YESTERDAY MAZATLAN (A TWO-MAN POST) APPEALED FOR HELP TO HANDLE THE OVER 500 APPLICANTS BESIEGING IT, AND GUADALAJARA HAS REQUESTED ASSIGNMENT QUALIFIED CONSULAR PERSONNEL ON TDY TO HELP WITH HEAVY WORKLOAD, EXACERBATED BY IMPENDING TRANSFER TWO CONSULAR OFFICERS WITHOUT IMMEDIATE REPLACEMENT. IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES WE DOUBT THAT ALL THE EFFORTS OF THE OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE EMBASSY TO PROMOTE US INTERESTS IN MEXICO CAN OVERCOME THE DAMAGE WE ARE DOING IN OUR CONSULAR ACTIVITIES. CLEARLY THIS IS MORE THAN JUST A CONSULAR PROBLEM. IT IS A PROBLEM THAT TOUCHES AND ADVERSELY AFFECTS ALL ELEMENTS OF THE EMBASSY AND THE CONSTITUENT POSTS AND THEIR MISSIONS.

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9. WE ARE WELL AWARE OF THE SHORTAGE OF PERSONNEL, OF FUNDS, ETC. WE ALSO KNOW THAT A REQUEST FOR TDY HELP -WHICH WE MAY BE COMPELLED TO MAKE ANY WAY - MAY NOT BE ABLE TO BE FULFILLED. BUT THE DEPARTMENT SHOULD KNOW OF THIS SITUATION IN THE ORDERING OF ITS PRIORITIES AND THE ALLOCATION OF ITS RESOURCES.
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